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Vaikuntha Ekadashi 2022

Sri Nityananda Trayodashi

Appearance day of Lord Nityananda

Monday Feb 14, 2022



hā hā prabhu nityānanda premānanda sukhī
kṛpābalokana koro āmi boro duḥkhī

My dear Lord Nityananda, You are always joyful in spiritual bliss.

Since You always appear very happy, I have come to You because I am most unhappy. If You kindly put Your glance over me, then I may also become happy.

Celebrations at ISKCON

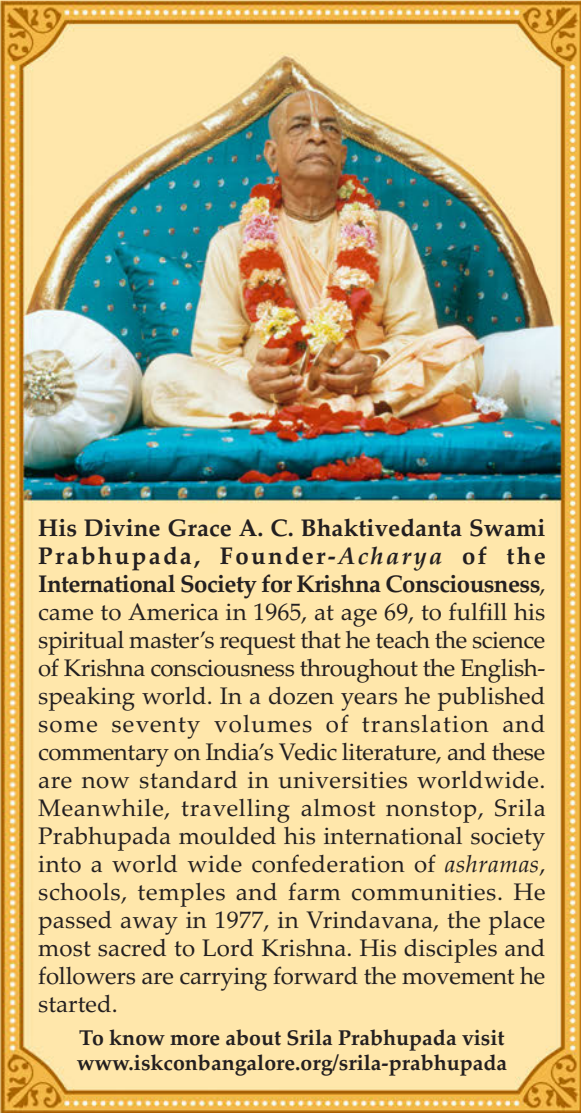
Hare Krishna Hill, Bangalore 6:00 pm onwards

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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master's request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India's Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of *ashramas*, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada

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“I Am Not This Body”

Without this preliminary spiritual knowledge, Lord Krishna says, one is a fool.

**By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness**

*sri bhagavan uvacha
asocyan anvasocas tvam / prajna-vadams ca bhasase
gatasun agatasums ca / nanusocanti panditah*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: “While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.”—*Bhagavad-gita* 2.11

Here Krishna is identified as *bhagavan*, or God. I have given the definition of *bhagavan*: a person who is full in all opulences—wealth, strength, fame, beauty, knowledge, and renunciation. If you find a person who has all these opulences in full, He is God. With this understanding, it will be very difficult to accept an ordinary man as God.

You’ll find that in the *Bhagavad-gita* Arjuna was convinced that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But because in the future others would have doubts about Krishna, Arjuna requested Krishna, “Will You show me Your universal form?” Krishna agreed and showed it to him. So now an intelligent man may test a so-called God by asking, “Just show something that proves you are God.” Without showing something—simply by false advertisement—one cannot be God.

Our mistake is that we do not know what is God. We think that God may be just like one of us. No. The God who controls the huge affairs of universal administration cannot be like one of us. He is superconscious.

Transmigration of the Soul

To understand God, first we must understand our self, or the soul within the body. The existence of life is very subtle. Our gross body is made of earth, water, fire, air, and sky. And behind that is a subtle body of mind, intelligence, and ego. When I give up the gross body, the subtle body carries me to another gross body. So when my body is lifeless, the subtle body is not. At night, for example, when the gross body is asleep the subtle body works, and therefore we dream. Similarly, when the gross body dies the subtle body carries us to the next life.

I have explained in the Introduction to *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* how a person changes bodies. When the mind, intelligence, and ego of a dying person are absorbed in a certain kind of thought, that thought takes him to a suitable body for the next life. Just as the air is pure but when passing over a rose tree it carries the aroma of the rose and when passing over a filthy place it carries the smell of that filthy place, so the mind, intelligence, and ego carry the flavour of our present activities to the next life. That is the subtle mystery of the transmigration of the soul from one body to another.

If in our present life we purify our consciousness, then in our next life we shall get a body full of transcendental “flavour.” If in our present life we practice devotion to God, then our next life will be as an associate of God. The whole thing is in our hands. If we want to be degraded, we can prepare ourselves in this life for degradation in the next. And if we want to elevate ourselves to the highest perfection of life—to become one of the associates of God—we can prepare ourselves for that. How?

Beyond the Gross and Subtle Bodies

Let me give an example: Since people are now trying to go to the moon, they cultivate thoughts of the moon, first by hearing. Unless you hear about a place, you cannot desire to abide there. Our friend Mr. Cohen has left for California. I have no understanding of California, but Mr. Cohen has told me that after reaching there he’ll write with a description of the place. Now, suppose if after reading that description I think of going there. Then I’ll prepare myself—“Oh, I must go there.” Similarly, when I described to you the spiritual world, you were very much pleased and thought, “I must go there.” So we have to hear. Unless we hear what God is like, what sort of place He has, what the mode of life is there, we cannot be attracted.

Now, to go to the spiritual world, we must first get free from the two bodies in which we are now living—the gross body and the subtle body. Suppose a man’s gross body appears dead. One must know that the subtle body has carried him to another body. The subtle body has not lost life. The life is there.

But when you get liberation, the subtle body—the egoistic life—has to be left also. And since in any case the body has to be left, why should one cry for the body? Therefore Krishna says to Arjuna, “A learned man does not lament



over the body. One who is actually learned has no concern for the body. He's concerned with the activities of the soul. You are speaking so many things according to bodily relations—'If my friends die, their wives will become widows ...' You are posing as a learned man, but you are fool number one because your whole conception is based on the body. Your whole argument with Me was based on the body."

Anyone who identifies with the body is not a learned man; he's a fool. He may be a B.A., an M.A., a Ph.D., but if he identifies with the body then according to *Bhagavad-gita* and according to the Vedic literature he's not a learned man. That is the first instruction in spiritual life. If we want to progress toward spiritual advancement in knowledge, we must have this preliminary knowledge: "I am not the body." This is not an advanced understanding. This is simply the A-B-C-D of spiritual life.

A Society of Cows and Asses

In the *Bhagavatam* there is a very nice verse in this connection:

*yasyatma-buddhih kunape tri-dhatuke
sva-dhiih kalatradisu bhauma-ijya-dhiih*

Kunape means "bag," and *tri-dhatuke* refers to the three elements that make up the body. According to the Ayurvedic medical system, the body is made of three elements: *kapha*, *pitta*, *vayu* (cold or water, heat or fire, and air). Therefore the body is called a bag made of these three elements. The *Bhagavatam* says, "One who identifies with the body made of water, fire, and air, who thinks of the issues or by-products of the body as his own kinsmen, who sees the land from which the body has grown as worshipable, and who goes to places of pilgrimage simply to bathe is considered no better than a cow or an ass."

My children, my wife, my relatives, my father, my mother, my brother, my nation, my society—these ideas are all due to bodily relations. There are thousands of women in the streets of New York, but because I have a bodily relation with a particular woman, I call her my wife. And because I have a bodily relation with the children produced by her, they are my children. But the basic principle—"I am this body"—is wrong. And because I am not the body, the expansions of the body are not mine. But the whole world is going on under the false impression that the body is the self and that the expansions of the body are mine.

The fighting between one nation and another nation is due to the body. Now everyone is fighting for land. "Oh, we are Indian." "We are Pakistani." "We are Vietnamese." "We are Americans." "We are German." So much fighting is going on over land. The land has become worshipable, so worshipable that one sacrifices his valuable life for it. Why is the land so dear? Because the body has grown from it. Again, the bodily connection.

Now, in the Christian world the water of the Jordan River is considered sacred. Similarly, when Hindus go to some pilgrimage place they bathe in the sacred river there. But one should know that going to a sacred place does not mean simply bathing in the water there. The real point of going to a sacred place is to find intelligent scholars in spiritual knowledge, to associate with them, and to learn from them. That is the purpose of going to a place of pilgrimage.

My residence is Vrindavana. In Vrindavana many great scholars and saintly persons live. One should go to such holy places not simply to bathe in the water; one must be intelligent enough to find some spiritually advanced man living there and take instruction from him and be benefited by that. But people do not go to find saints. They simply bathe and purchase some goods and advertise, "Oh, I have been to such and such pilgrimage place."

The *Bhagavatam* says that such persons are considered cows or asses. Practically the whole world is moving as a civilization of cows and asses because our whole life is based on identification with the body. The center is the body, and everything expands from the body.

Perfection in Spiritual Knowledge

A woman in the audience: In the Indian places known as sacred places, isn't it also a fact that there is more magnetism there because of the meeting of saints?

Srila Prabhupada: Certainly. Therefore the place itself has got some magnetism—just like Vrindavana. Now I am sitting here in New York—the world's greatest city—but my heart is always hankering after Vrindavana. I am not happy here. I shall be very happy to return to my Vrindavana, that sacred place.

"But then why are you here?" Because it is my duty. I have brought some message for you people. Because I have been ordered by a superior, my spiritual master: "Whatever you have learned, you should go to the Western countries and distribute that knowledge." So in spite of all my difficulties, all my inconveniences, I am here because of duty. If I go and sit down at Vrindavana, I shall be very comfortable there. I'll have no anxiety, nothing of the sort. You see? But I have taken all the risk in old age because I am duty bound. So I have to execute my duty in



spite of all my inconveniences. That is the idea.

So the basic principle of spiritual advancement in knowledge is that one should first be convinced that one is not the body. Then other spiritual knowledge will begin. Unless one understands himself, he cannot understand God. "I am not the body"—that knowledge one must accept, at least theoretically.

Here it is said, *bhagavan uvacha*, which means that Krishna has such extensive knowledge that there cannot be any mistakes in His teachings. He's the authority, so whatever He says is right. That is the conception of *bhagavan*. Here it is not said *Krishna uvacha*, because someone may doubt Krishna—"Krishna was a historical personality. Why should you be so much concerned with Krishna?" So it is said, *bhagavan uvacha*. Bhagavan has all knowledge. So there cannot be any mistake in whatever He will speak.

For ordinary persons there are four imperfections: to commit mistakes, to become illusioned, to have imperfect senses, and to cheat. First, we must commit mistakes. We are sure to commit mistakes. Even Gandhi, the great politician, committed mistakes, and so have many other great men. "To err is human." Any man, however great in the estimation of the world, is sure to commit mistakes.

Another imperfection is that we are illusioned. Illusion means taking one thing for another. In the desert one accepts the sand as water. That is called illusion. Similarly, every one of us who identifies with the body is under illusion. Even the President is under illusion. Even the greatest scientist is under illusion.

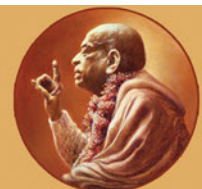
The next imperfection is the tendency to cheat. One is imperfect, but he wants to give knowledge to others. That is cheating. You may ask, "You are also giving us knowledge...?" No, I am not giving you knowledge. I am speaking *Bhagavad-gita*. I am giving you knowledge as given by Lord Krishna. It is not my knowledge.

And finally, we have imperfect senses.

One who is above these four imperfections—who never commits mistakes, is never illusioned, never cheats others, and has perfect senses—He is God. That is a definition of God. And one who is not God but who comes to the perfect stage of life is liberated. Then he's as good as God.

Thank you very much. 🙏

Srila Prabhupada, the founder-*acharya* of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita*. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada-lectures



SRILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

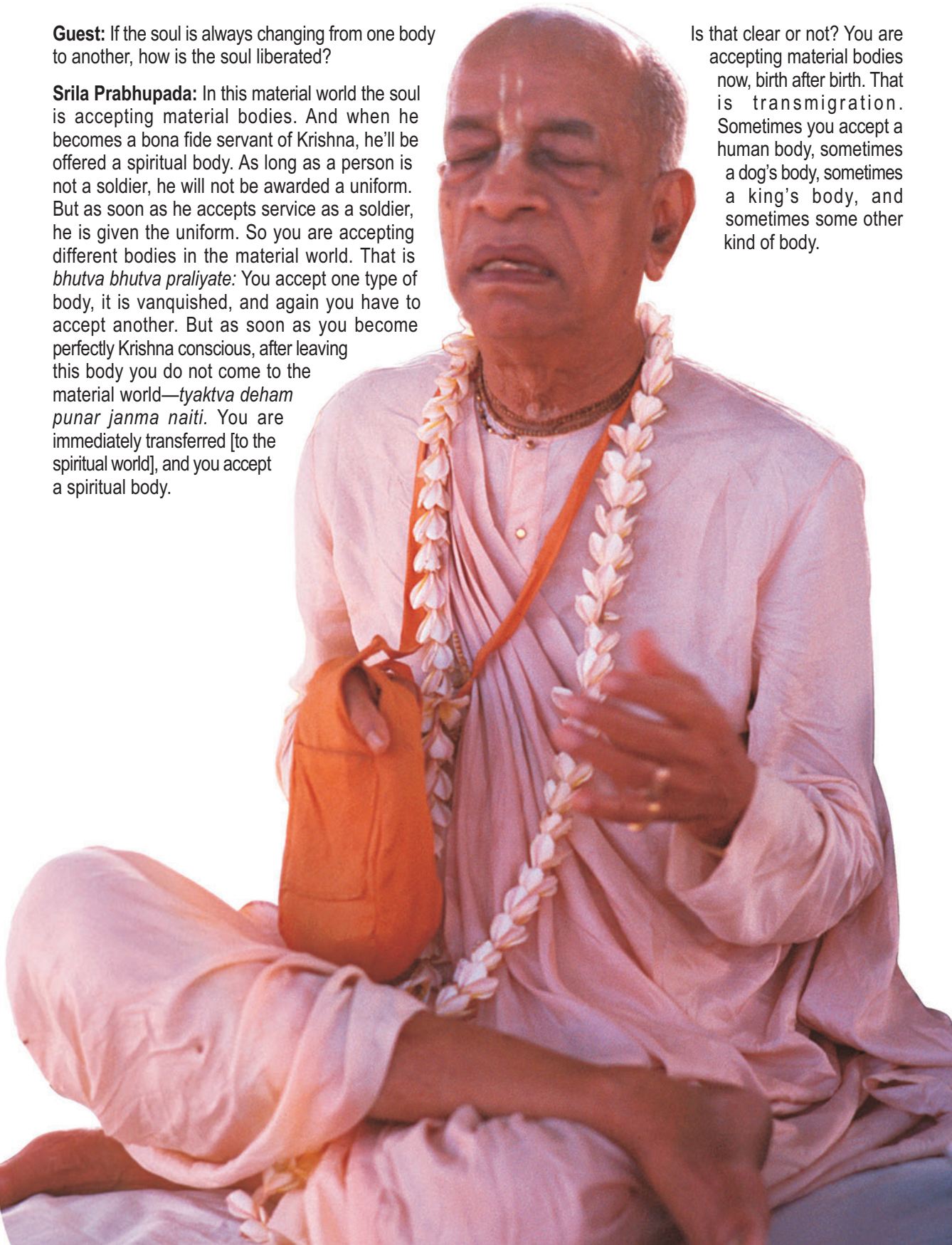
No More Cheap Bodies

The following conversation took place in Gorakhpur, India, on February 17, 1971.

Guest: If the soul is always changing from one body to another, how is the soul liberated?

Srila Prabhupada: In this material world the soul is accepting material bodies. And when he becomes a bona fide servant of Krishna, he'll be offered a spiritual body. As long as a person is not a soldier, he will not be awarded a uniform. But as soon as he accepts service as a soldier, he is given the uniform. So you are accepting different bodies in the material world. That is *bhutva bhutva praliyate*: You accept one type of body, it is vanquished, and again you have to accept another. But as soon as you become perfectly Krishna conscious, after leaving this body you do not come to the material world—*tyaktva deham punar janma naiti*. You are immediately transferred [to the spiritual world], and you accept a spiritual body.

Is that clear or not? You are accepting material bodies now, birth after birth. That is transmigration. Sometimes you accept a human body, sometimes a dog's body, sometimes a king's body, and sometimes some other kind of body.



Now when you are Krishna conscious, you haven't got to accept a material body. You go directly to Krishna and accept a spiritual body. Then your life is eternal.

Guest: You will not again get a material body?

Srila Prabhupada: No. *Tyaktva deham punar janma naiti*. When you are Krishna conscious, you no longer accept a material body. Krishna says, *mam eti*: "The soul comes to Me." And *mam eti* means that whoever goes to Krishna has as good a body as Krishna. That is oneness.

Guest: Then what does it mean when Krishna tells Arjuna on the battlefield, "Never was there a time when you and I were not existing."

Srila Prabhupada: Krishna and Arjuna are existing, and you are existing. You are eternal. You are simply changing bodies. What is the difficulty in understanding this fact? But Krishna is not changing His body. That is the difference.

Guest: The soul will not merge into Krishna's light?

Srila Prabhupada: The soul is changing bodies. Why are you talking of merging? You are changing your body, I am changing my body, but we are individuals. I may change to a dog's body; you may change to a demigod's body. That is going on. According to one's *karma* one is changing bodies.

Now, when you are fully Krishna conscious, a change of body will also take place. But that new body will be spiritual. As long as you get material bodies, you have to change—one after another, one after another, one after another.

For example, if you purchase something cheap, it goes wrong and you have to purchase a new thing. But if you purchase a real, nice thing, it will continue for good. Similarly, as long as you are getting a cheap body, a material body, you have to change. And as soon as you get the most valuable body, a spiritual body, there will be no more change.

One who does not know what is Krishna thinks that someone is greater than Krishna. But anyone who knows Krishna as He is gets that permanent body immediately—simply by knowing Krishna.

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvatah
tyaktva deham punar janma
naiti mam eti so 'rjuna*

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." So you simply have to understand Krishna. Then the whole problem is solved.

Try to understand Krishna. Krishna can be understood simply by devotional service. Krishna says, *bhaktya mam abhijanati*. And that begins with surrender to Krishna. *Sarva-dharman parityajya*: Whatever nonsense you have known, throw it away. Simply surrender to Krishna. That is the beginning of *Bhagavad-gita*. 🙏

Fasting		Festivals	
Feb 12	Ekadashi	Feb 7	Sri Advaita Acharya - Appearance <i>Fasting till noon</i>
Feb 13	<i>break fast</i>		
Feb 27	Ekadashi	Feb 13	Sri Varahadeva - Appearance <i>Fasting observed previous day till noon</i>
Feb 28	<i>break fast</i>		Srila Prabhupada book distribution closing ceremony and prize distribution (in ISKCON Bangalore)
		Feb 14	Nityananda Trayodashi - Appearance of Sri Nityananda Prabhu <i>Fasting till noon</i>
		Feb 21	Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura - Appearance <i>Fasting till noon</i>

Om or Hare Krishna

Though the sacred sound om is often associated with impersonalists, only the devotees understand its full import.

By Karuppiyah Chockalingam

Throughout the Vedas there is much mention of the syllable *om*. This spiritual vibration, which is sometimes called *omkara* or *pranava*, comprises three Sanskrit sounds—*a*, *u*, and *ma* (the *a* in *ma* is silent). When these three sounds are combined, the result is the single-syllabled vibration *om*.

An unusual attribute of *om* is that it has no direct translation from Sanskrit into English. And though every Vedantist will accept *om* to be a representation of God, exactly how *om* is viewed differs according to various schools of thought. These schools can be classified into two main categories, the Mayavadi, or impersonalist, and the Vaishnava, or devotee.

The impersonalist, as the name suggests, is happy to treat *om* as an impersonal, formless representation of the Absolute Truth. Therefore, the Mayavadi will very openly chant *om*, being careful to avoid names such as Krishna and Rama, which, according to them, are limited. A Mayavadi might explain his theory of *pranava om* like this: “Since this whole universe has been created by Him (God), whatever there is in the universe is Him alone. As such, He has no name. But if He has to have a name, then all names are His, for He alone is appearing in all forms. The first sound in most languages is *a*; the last sound to leave as our mouth closes is *m*; *u* is the center of the two. Together, they represent all the basic sounds from which words are produced. And therefore, these three sounds, making up the syllable *om*, represent the entire universe of names and forms.”

Using such reasoning, the impersonalist concludes that the holy name *Krishna* is ultimately no different from any other word one can dream up. *Om*, says the impersonalist, contains all sounds, and so it is the universal sound, whereas “*Krishna*” and “*Rama*” are limited.

All Vaishnavas know, however, that such speculation on the Lord’s holy name is one of the ten worst offenses one can commit at His lotus feet (*tathartha vadah*). Lord Chaitanya, therefore, has repeatedly warned us to steer clear of such offenders, or *pasandis*.

What does Omkara mean to Vaishnavas?

The Gosvamis of Vrindavana have analyzed *om* (*a-u-m*) as follows: The letter *a* refers to Krishna, the master of all planets and all living entities. The letter *u* indicates Srimati Radharani, the pleasure potency of Krishna, and *m* indicates the living entities. Thus *omkara* represents Krishna; His name, fame, pastimes, potencies, and devotees; and everything else pertaining to Him.

To the devotees of the Lord, there is no difference between chanting His holy name and reciting *omkara*, for Krishna has stated in *Bhagavad-gita* (7.8, 9.17, 10.25) that *omkara* is He Himself in the form of sound. Just as *omkara* is non-different from the Lord’s holy name, it is also inseparable from the Lord’s beautiful two-armed form as Shyamasundara. *Pranava om* is therefore used in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* to address the Supreme Person—Vasudeva, or Krishna.

Thus, *omkara* serves no other purpose than to remind the devotee of Krishna. Srila Prabhupada confirms this fact in a purport to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (9.14.48) wherein he states that just as Hare Krishna addresses the Lord together with His energy, so too does *omkara*.

It is therefore clearly evident that *om* refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. Yet, surprisingly enough, the Mayavadis are not altogether wrong in thinking that *omkara* possesses no form. Where’s the catch?



ॐ

Three angles from which Om may be viewed

Omkara, like Krishna, can be realized or viewed from three angles, as Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan. The speculative Mayavadi knows *omkara* to be nothing beyond Brahman, or spiritual, and at the same time without shape or form. The mystic yogi sees whatever the Mayavadi sees but also realizes that *omkara* is situated within the heart of everyone as Paramatma, or the Supersoul. And the Vaishnava knows all that the other two transcendentalists know, but he also realizes that it is the personal aspect of *omkara*, Bhagavan, that makes the other two aspects possible.

Srila Prabhupada likened these three features of the Lord to the sunlight, the sun globe, and the sun-god residing within the sun. If I were studying the sun, would my knowledge be complete if I could research no further than the sunlight or the sun globe? Some material scientists might answer yes, but a more intelligent person would want to know, “Where does the sunlight come from?” or “What gives the sun its power to shine?” Just as one automatically knows about the sunlight and sun globe the moment he learns that the sun-god, Vivashvan, is the source of both, so one realizes *omkara* completely when one understands that *om* ultimately possesses form. Srila Prabhupada highlights this important fact in a purport to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (8.3.2).

The understanding of the impersonalist philosopher, though not altogether incorrect, is therefore incomplete. The devotee or Vaishnava, however, knows *omkara* in truth.

Hare Krishna and Om—the same in all respects?

Though Hare Krishna and *om* are equally potent sound forms of the Lord, there is one difference. If at the time of death one chants Hare Krishna, even though unintentionally, one attains the spiritual Vaikuntha planets without a doubt. This is a universal truth that has been accepted by all great authorities. If, however, one similarly chants *om*, not thinking of Krishna, one attains to the impersonal *brahmajyoti* sky of the spiritual world but does not associate with Krishna. This fact is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.11).

One may ask why, if *omkara* is ultimately personal, one shouldn’t reciprocate with Krishna personally on leaving one’s body with *om* on one’s tongue. The answer is that it is possible to chant *om* and go to Krishna but the process involves much more than simply externally uttering *om*.

According to the *Gita* (8.13), those who chant *om* and at the same time remember Krishna while leaving the body do indeed go to the Vaikuntha planets:

*om ity ekaksaram brahma
vyaharan mam anusmaran
yah prayati tyajan deham
sa yati paramam gatim*

“After being situated in this yoga practice and vibrating the sacred syllable *om*, the supreme combination of letters, if one thinks of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and quits his body, he will certainly reach the spiritual planets.”

In a purport to *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (7.15.31) Srila Prabhupada informs us that to fix the turbulent, restless mind upon Krishna at the moment of death while thus uttering *om*, there are certain rules one must follow. These rules are listed in *Bhagavad-gita* (6.11, 8.12). For example, one must sit in a certain precise posture, cease all the activities of the senses, fix the mind on the heart, and fix the life air at the top of the head.

In addition to all this, Prabhupada points out that only *brahmanas*, or those in the mode of goodness, can properly recite *om*. When one chants *om* after having fulfilled all these prerequisites, only then can he reap the same result as he would have received from inadvertently chanting Hare Krishna.

Then why such a thing as om?

Since both the Lord’s holy name and *omkara* are transcendental sound vibrations, what then is the purpose of *omkara*?

Krishna, being all-knowing, could clearly understand that there will always be a class of people called *avyakta-sakta cetasam*, or those attached to His impersonal aspect. Since such impersonalists have no solid name or form to fix their minds upon, Krishna has provided them with *pranava om*.

Since *om* has no direct meaning or refers to no particular form, the Mayavadis assume, without complete knowledge, that the Absolute Truth is beyond all names and forms. To make the Mayavadis think this way was Krishna’s intention, for not everyone is capable of acknowledging the Lord’s transcendental name and form. Thus, their minds being absorbed in impersonal *om*, the Mayavadis ultimately merge with the unmanifest *brahmajyoti* effulgence



of the Lord, a type of liberation called *sayujya-mukti*.

Though *sayujya-mukti* ensures freedom from material misery, the Vaishnavas consider it no better than hell, for in such a state there is no reciprocation with the lotus feet of the Lord. Consequently, the pure devotees are very careful to see *omkara* in the light of His beautiful form.

Devotees Spread only the Holy Name

The pure devotee, whose mind is fixed twenty-four hours a day on the form of the Lord, rises above all rules and requirements for chanting *om*. Such a devotee, having transcended the three modes of material nature, goes beyond even the qualifications of a *brahmana*. Thus the devotee's chanting of *om* is pure, whereas a Mayavadi, who cannot relate *omkara* to Krishna, chants *om* being submerged, to a certain extent, in ignorance. Those who actually follow every prerequisite and recite *om* as directed by Krishna are generally those mystic yogis who, as previously discussed, are more inclined to inner meditation on Krishna as Paramatma than to pure devotional service.

Although all Vaishnavas are more than qualified to freely chant *om*, the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, devotees of Lord Chaitanya, seldom do so. As mentioned earlier, one must be a qualified *brahmana* to chant *om* properly. Most people in this Age of Kali are no better than *shudras* (*kalau sudra-sambhavah*). Therefore, the Vaishnavas, who care only for the welfare of others, do not very much promote the chanting of *omkara*. Instead, they particularly promote the chanting of Hare Krishna.

As explained by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, *niyamitah smarane na kalah*: the requirements for chanting Hare Krishna are absolutely none. Therefore, the only practical means of spiritual advancement for all of us fallen souls of Kali-yuga turns out, once again, to be the chanting of the *maha-mantra*: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. 🙏

The Glories of the Demigods

SHIVA

The Auspicious One

by Satyaraja dasa

Shiva is among the most widely worshiped deities in India. With names such as Mahadeva (“the great god”) and Nataraja (“the king of dancers”), he is venerated in ancient holy cities like Benares, where Shaivites (as his worshipers are called) devote their lives to him, viewing him as the Supreme Lord.

The fact is, he is supreme. As the scriptures say, “*Srimad-Bhagavatam* is supreme among *Puranas* just as the



Ganga is the greatest of all rivers, Lord Achyuta [Vishnu] the best among deities, and Lord Shambhu [Shiva] the greatest among devotees of Lord Vishnu [*vaishnavanam yatha shambhu*].” (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 12.13.16) According to this and similar statements, Shiva may correctly be considered the greatest—at least among devotees—but among gods the supreme is Vishnu. This is made clear as far back as the *Rg Veda* (1.22.20): “The lotus feet of Vishnu are the supreme objective of all the demigods. Those lotus feet of the Lord are as enlightening as the sun in the sky.”

Shaivites, however, tend to see Shiva not just as the greatest devotee but as God Himself. There is some basis for this in scripture. In the *Bhagavatam* (4.7.50) Lord Vishnu Himself says, “Brahma, Lord Shiva, and I are the supreme cause of the material manifestation. I am the Supersoul, the self-sufficient witness. But impersonally there is no difference between Brahma, Lord Shiva, and Me.”

In other words, all three divinities are one because they are all *avatars*, or descents of the Supreme, for the creation, maintenance, and annihilation of the material world. In this context, they are known as *guna-avatars*, and they preside over the modes of passion (embodied by Brahma, the creator), goodness (embodied by Vishnu, the maintainer), and ignorance (embodied by Shiva, the destroyer). All three of these *avatars* are considered aspects of the same principle of Godhead.

The *Mahabharata* too (*Anusasana-parva* 135) says that Vishnu and Shiva are nondifferent and even counts the names Shiva, Sarva, Sthanu, Ishana, and Rudra—names traditionally identified with Shiva—among the thousand names of Vishnu. Such identification between Shiva and the Supreme Lord seemingly gives weight to the idea of contemporary Hinduism that all the gods mentioned in the Vedic literature are one.

But a close study of scripture shows that while there is reason to see Shiva as nondifferent from Vishnu, there is also reason to distinguish strongly between them. According to *Bhagavad-gita*, which is accepted by nearly all classes of transcendentalists in India—including Vaishnavas and Shaivites—Vishnu (Krishna) is the ultimate Godhead, to whom even Shiva must bow down. This is not a matter of opinion or sectarian prejudice. Krishna identifies Himself as the source of all material and spiritual worlds (Bg. 10.8), and Arjuna confirms that Krishna is indeed supreme (Bg. 10.12). Krishna is “the God of all the gods” (*devesa*, Bg. 11.37).

In countless incidents from the *Puranas*, Shiva is clearly seen to be Vishnu’s devotee. For example, there is the story of Vrikasura, a demon who practiced severe austerities and then asked Shiva for a boon—the power to kill at once any living being whose head Vrikasura would merely touch. Shiva granted the boon, but was soon to regret his decision, for Vrika came after him to try out the newfound power. Lord Shiva ran to all parts of the universe to escape this power-mad devotee and finally ended up at the door of the kingdom of Vishnu.

Hearing the words of a frightened Shiva, Vishnu devised a plan to help him. Vishnu appeared directly before Vrikasura and told him Shiva was not to be trusted. “Shiva is fond of joking and even lying,” said Vishnu. “I am sure he is not telling you the truth. He was just teasing you. Touch your own head, and you will see that nothing will happen.”

Vrika, of course, touched his own head and died. But the point of this story, in the present context, is Vishnu’s superiority over Shiva, who could not resolve the problem on his own. After racing through the entire material cosmos to escape Vrikasura, Shiva sought refuge in Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

To counter this, Shiva devotees cite traditions in which Rama, for example, is seen as a devotee of Shiva. This would make an *avata* of Vishnu subservient to Shiva, and thus support the tenets of Shaivism. But upon closer study Rama’s worship of Shiva turns out to be a later tradition, not supported in Valmiki’s *Ramayana*. Moreover, even these later traditions explain that Rama became a devotee of Shiva only out of etiquette: Rama wanted to become a greater devotee of Shiva than the evil Ravana was, and then ask Shiva for permission to defeat Ravana.

The *Ramayana* offers many stories about the glories of Shiva—his destruction of Daksa’s sacrifice, his marriage with Uma (Parvati), his drinking of the ocean of poison, his killing of the demon Andhaka, his cursing of Kandarpa—but ultimately the *Ramayana* makes the supremacy of Rama quite clear. Rama (as an incarnation of Vishnu) is supreme.

The differences between Shiva and Vishnu should be further underlined. As Srila Prabhupada says (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.9.16, purport),

Of the three principal agents controlling the three modes of material nature, Vishnu is the Almighty; even though He is within material nature for the purpose of maintenance, He is not controlled by the laws of material nature. The other two, Brahma and Shiva, although almost as greatly powerful as Vishnu, are



"When milk is transformed by acids into yogurt, the yogurt is neither the same as nor different from the milk. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda—Lord Sri Krishna—of whom Lord Shiva is a transformation for performing the work of destruction."—Sri Brahma-samhita 5.45

within the control of the material energy of the Supreme Lord.

Shiva is superior to Brahma, who is an empowered soul (*jiva*), but Shiva is not quite on the same level as Vishnu. It is therefore said that Shiva is a unique living being who merits his own category, known as *shiva-tattva*.

To clarify Lord Shiva's position, the *Brahma-samhita* (5.45) offers an analogy: "When milk is transformed by acids into yogurt, the yogurt is neither the same as nor different from the milk. I adore the primeval Lord Govinda [Krishna, Vishnu], of whom Lord Shiva is a transformation for performing the work of destruction."

Though milk and yogurt are essentially nondifferent, yogurt is a *product* of milk. One can use milk to make ghee, cheese, ice cream, or yogurt, but one cannot turn yogurt into milk. Clearly, then, Shiva's divinity is intimately connected with, even dependent upon, his relationship to Vishnu.

This is made clearer still in the *Bhagavatam* (3.28.22): "The blessed Lord Shiva becomes all the more blessed by bearing on his head the holy waters of the Ganges, which has its source in the water that washed the Lord's lotus feet."

Srila Prabhupada comments, "Lord Shiva is important because he is holding on his head the holy Ganges water, which has its origin in the footwash of Lord Vishnu.

"In the *Hari-bhakti-vilasa*, by Sanatana Gosvami, it is said that anyone who puts the Supreme Lord and the demigods, including Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, on the same level at once becomes a *pasandi*, or atheist. We should never consider the Supreme Lord Vishnu and the demigods to be on an equal footing."

So, theologically, Shiva is both God and yet different from God as well. Because of Shiva's intimate contact with the quality of ignorance and with matter (which is innately ignorant), the living beings in this world cannot receive the same spiritual restoration by worshipping him as by worshipping Vishnu.

And yet they try. As mentioned earlier, the worshipers of Shiva are second in number only to the worshipers of Vishnu. Shaiva Siddhanta, a form of Shiva worship found mainly in South India, is a force to be reckoned with, and Vira Shaivism (or Lingayatism), another form of the religion, is popular in the South Indian state of Karnataka.

There are other forms of Shiva worship as well, but the only authorized form comes down in the Rudra Sampradaya, also known as the Vishnusvami Sampradaya, an authorized Vaishnava lineage in which Shiva is worshiped as the greatest devotee of Vishnu. Its adherents say that ultimate liberation comes from devotion to Vishnu. And Shiva, they say, showed how to be the perfect devotee. Even Shiva himself confirms that one can achieve the supreme destination only by the mercy of Vishnu. Lord Shiva says, *mukti-pradata sarvesam vishnur eva namsayah*: "There is no doubt that Vishnu is the deliverer of liberation for everyone."

The Birth of Lord Shiva

The pastime of Lord Shiva's birth is described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (3.12.7-13): "Although Brahma tried to curb his anger, it came out from between his eyebrows, and a child of mixed blue and red was immediately generated. (7)

"After his [Shiva's] birth, he began to cry: O destiny maker [Brahma], teacher of the universe, kindly designate my name and place. (8)

"The all-powerful Brahma, born from the lotus flower, pacified the boy with gentle words, accepting his request, and said: Do not cry. I shall certainly do as you desire. (9)

"Thereafter, Brahma said: O chief of the demigods, you shall be called by the name Rudra by all people because you have anxiously cried. (10)

"My dear boy, I have already selected the following places for your residence: the heart, the senses, the air of life, the sky, the air, the fire, the water, the earth, the sun, the moon, and austerity. (11)

"My dear Rudra, you have eleven other names: Manyu, Manu, Mahinasa, Mahan, Shiva, Atadhvaja, Ugrareta, Bhava, Kala, Vamadeva, and Dhrtavrata. (12)

"O Rudra, you also have eleven wives, called the Rudranis, and they are as follows: Dhi, Dhrti, Rasala, Uma, Niyut, Sarpi, Ila, Ambika, Iravati, Svadha, and Diksha." (13)

Shiva and Parvati, as his wife is also known, have their abode in Shiva-loka, between the material and spiritual worlds (see *Brahma-samhita* 5.43). This description is of how Shiva appeared in the material world. 🌸

Our Azhwar - where everything began

Azhwar Thirunagari Adinatha Temple - Part 2

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

Continued from previous issue ...

Located on the banks of Thamirabarani river in the town of Azhwar Thirunagari is the temple of Lord Adinatha and Swami Nammazhwar.

In the previous issue, we immersed ourselves in the *lilas* of Swami Nammazhwar who was born in this divine temple. In this issue, we shall discuss the temple and the Lord, for the Lord would always prefer to have His devotee glorified first.

Legend

Manthan, a *brahmana* boy, having abused the Vedas, incurred the wrath of his master, who cursed him to be born an outcast in his next birth. He was born as Danthan but led a disciplined life and came to Kurugur to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Adipiran Perumal.

The priests in the temple drove him away as he was an outcast. But Danthan made a sand deity of Adipiran Perumal on the banks of River Thamirabarani and carried on his worship. The priests in the temple suddenly lost their eyesight and when they surrendered to the Lord to find out the reason, a voice from the sky directed them to ask pardon from Danthan. The priests did so and retrieved their eyesight. Danthan had the vision of the Lord.

We can see the deity of Danthan sculpted in the first step of the *ardha mandapam* of the temple.

Another interesting pastime is that some sages of yore desired to see the Varaha incarnation of the Supreme Lord, so they performed intense *tapasya* in this very temple, where they were given *darshan* of Varaha Perumal. Hence this temple is also called as Varaha-kshetra.

There is yet another interesting pastime about this temple:



Swami Nammazhwar shrine



Adinatha Perumal with His consorts



Self manifested deity of Swami Nammazhwar

Shankan, a sage, was performing *tapasya* with the intention of becoming one of the guards of the eight directions of the universe. Narada Muni advised him to offer the *tapasya* towards Lord Narayana, who would grant him *moksha*. When Shankan asked about the way to achieve it, Narada Muni told him that he should be born as a conch in the sea where River Thamirabarani merges, and worship Adinatha for 1000 years. Shankan did so and worshipped first the Lord established by Danthan. Later, instructed by Narada Muni, he prayed to Adipiran in the morning as a human being and in the night went to the sea as a conch. Once, when he was coming to perform his daily worship along with his crew, a whale stopped his progress. Shankan prayed intensely to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Adipiran. At that time, a man appeared in the sea and swallowed the whale. Shankan and his crew thereafter happily carried on their prayer. After 1000 years, the Lord with His Devis on His Garuda Vahanam, revealed Himself to Shankan and his fellows and granted them *moksha*.

The wharf where Shankan and his crew entered is known as Thiruchankaniturai even today. Since it was an entry through water, this holy place has gained the name Thirtha-kshetra.

This legend is related to the *Ramayana* and subsequently to Nammazhwar, because of whom this holy city is called Azhwar Thirunagari. Three days before the cessation of Ramavatara, Lord Yama came to see Lord Rama, who instructed His brother Lakshmana not to allow anybody thereafter. Sage Durvasa, desiring to see Lord Rama before the completion of His incarnation, came to see the Lord, but Lakshmana, afraid of incurring his wrath and curse, did not stop him. But, the displeased Rama cursed His brother to become a tree, as He did not respect His order. Lakshmana cried and asked for forgiveness, that He could not live without Rama. Rama then said that He Himself had to be like a statue for 16 years, for committing the sin of sending Sita to the forest, so He would sit in the hole of the tree at that time. Lakshmana would become a tamarind tree at the Varaha-kshetra. Sage Kashyapa and his wife, born as Kari and Utaya Nangai, would come to this place, praying for a child. And Rama would be born as Nammazhwar.

The Temple

A big *mandapam* in front of the main temple known as *pandal mandapam* is decorated for the grand festival. This *pandal* was built by an ardent devotee, Sri Pandala Ramaswamy Nayakar during 1807. He took initiative in starting a wonderful Nava Garuda *sevai utsavam* and made arrangements for the *mandapam* and other paraphernalia. In honour of his devotional service, the *mandapam* is named *pandal mandapam*.

A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines and two of its three bodies of water. The *rajagopuram*, the temple's gateway tower, is 95 ft (29 m) tall. Built on an area covering 5 acres of land, Azhwar Thirunagari Perumal Temple is one of the Nava Thirupathi *sthalam* and a worship place of the planet Guru (Jupiter).

There are big beautiful halls - *Thirumanjana Mandapam*, *Thirumamani Mandapam* and *Kannadi Mandapam*. Each of these has fine sculptures and stone images of celestials and animals and they exhibit great beauty, artistic excellence and amazing workmanship. Unlike many temples, here there is a stone *nadaswaram*, a wind musical instrument native to South India - resembling the *shehnai* - which is large in size and has a simple double reed, rather than the more complex quadruple reed. Normally played in pairs, it is accompanied by a pair of drums called *Thavil* (in Tamil). Sri Adi Kumbeswaraswamy temple (7th century; dedicated to Lord Shiva) in the temple town of Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu, is yet another temple that has a stone *nadaswaram*. In Sept. 2017, the Asthana

Vidwan played on this stone wind instrument. Lord Vishnu is worshipped here as Adinathan or Adipiran. He is seen with His consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi.

The *swamyabhu* Deity of Vishnu faces east and is in standing posture. The feet of the Deity are buried under the earth. Goddess Lakshmi and Bhudevi are worshipped here as Adinathanayaki and Thirukkukurukornayaki. Also on the temple premises are small shrines dedicated to various forms of Vishnu - Rama, Venugopala, Narasimha, Varaha. The temple pond is known as Brahma Theertham.

Festivals

One of the most important festivals apart from the *jayanti* of Swami Nammazhwar, is the Garuda Seva of all the nine temples of Nava Thirupathi. There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly festivals performed in the temple

Swami Ramanuja in the temple

Madhurakavi Azhwar wanted to revere a deity of his guru Nammazhwar and requested him for a deity. Nammazhwar asked his disciple to boil water from Thamirabarani river nearby and the copper deity of Ramanuja emerged after boiling the river water. Nammazhwar explained that he is the Bhavishya Acharya or the Acharya for the future generations. It is to be noted that *tamiram* in Tamil means copper. The Ramanuja deity is also a self-manifested deity made of copper. Since he is the acharya of the future, this is the only temple where Swami Ramanuja can be seen wearing white cloth instead of the usual saffron.

Madhurakavi Azhwar boiled the water of Thamirabarani river for the second time, as guided by Nammazhwar. This time he received the copper *vigraha* of Nammazhwar as he had requested. The Ramanuja temple is behind the famous Adinatha temple *divya desam* in Azhwar Thirunagari.

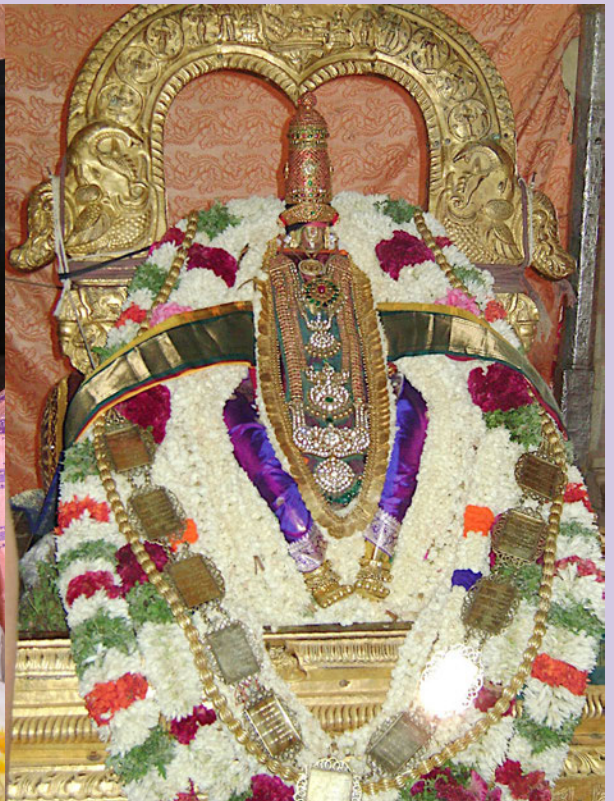
Nammazhwar has sung in praise of the Lord of Azhwar Thirunagari in this temple:

Then when none of the gods, worlds, beings, and aught else existed, He made Brahma, with him the gods, worlds and all the beings. He stands as Adipiran, in fair Kurugur where jewelled houses rise like mountains; then what other god do you seek?

O men of the world! Then He created you and the gods you worship. With unending goodness and fame, He resides willingly in Kurugur temple town with balconied mansions all around. Sing and dance and praise Him, roaming everywhere.



Swami Nammazhwar in Parameshwara Vinangaram temple



Swami Nammazhwar in Azhwar Thirunagari



Adinatha Perumal in Garuda Vahana



Swami Nammazhwar in Azhwar Thirunagari

He made all the gods and all the worlds, then, in a trice swallowed all; then hid, issued, traversed, and shifted all. O men of the world! Now speak! Knowing this, do you still not understand? Other than His form in Kurugur, worshipped by the gods, there is no Lord.

He is the lord of Shiva, Brahma and the other gods you speak of. See this for yourself in Kapala Moksha, the redemption of Shiva. Now how does it help the Linga worshippers to speak ill of the Lord, who resides in radiant Kurugur city surrounded by walls?

Look ye, all those who quote the Linga-purana, ye Jainas and Baudhdhas! Instead of arguing endlessly, offer praise to the Lord who stands in Kurugur, where tall ears of paddy sway gently in the wind like whisks. He is you and all your gods, this is no lie.

You who desolately worship lowly gods have been relegated to this, because if liberation is given to all, there will be no world then. This is the sport of the clever Lord of Kurugur city, where golden paddy and lotus flowers abound; figure this out and run.

Running tirelessly, taking numerous births, worshipping lesser gods, you have tried so many paths to truth; now become servants of Adimurti, Lord of Kurugur, whom the celestials in hordes stand and worship. The beautiful Garuda dances on His banner.

Then it was Narayana's grace which protected Markandeya, when he took refuge in the naked-god Shiva. When the great Adipiran stands in Kurugur city, surrounded by stork-white pandanus hedges, what other god do you praise?

The six expounded doctrines and those like them cannot fathom Him; thus He sits, as Adipiran in Kurugur, surrounded by beautiful fields. If you seek liberation, bear Him in your heart.

He contains, within His faultless frame, all gods, all worlds and all else. He resides in the fertile Kurugur where paddy and sugarcane grow tall. He came as a manikin, He danced with an array of pots. Service to Him alone is fit and proper.

This decad of the faultless thousand songs, sung with love by Kurugur city's Maran Satakopan addresses Adipiran, Lord of discus and vakula flower-garlands. Those who master it will have access to the other Vaikunta as well, the city of no return. 🙏

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam

Akshaya Patra News

Akshaya Patra kitchen inauguration in Puducherry



Honourable Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan, and Honourable Chief Minister, Shri. N. Rangasamy inaugurated The Akshaya Patra Foundation's new kitchen at an event held in Lawspet on January 5, 2022. This is Akshaya Patra's 60th kitchen in the country and first in the UT of Puducherry.



Mitsubishi Power India Private Limited donated a food distribution vehicle to the Akshaya Patra Foundation in Nagpur. Mr. Swapan Kumar Chakraborty, Project Manager, Mitsubishi Power handed over the keys of the vehicle to Sri Vyomapada Dasa, Unit President, Akshaya Patra Foundation, Chhattisgarh and Nagpur.



Sri Vaikuntha Ekadashi



*Abhisheka of moolavar,
Sri Srinivasa Govinda*



*Arati to
Sri Srinivasa Govinda*

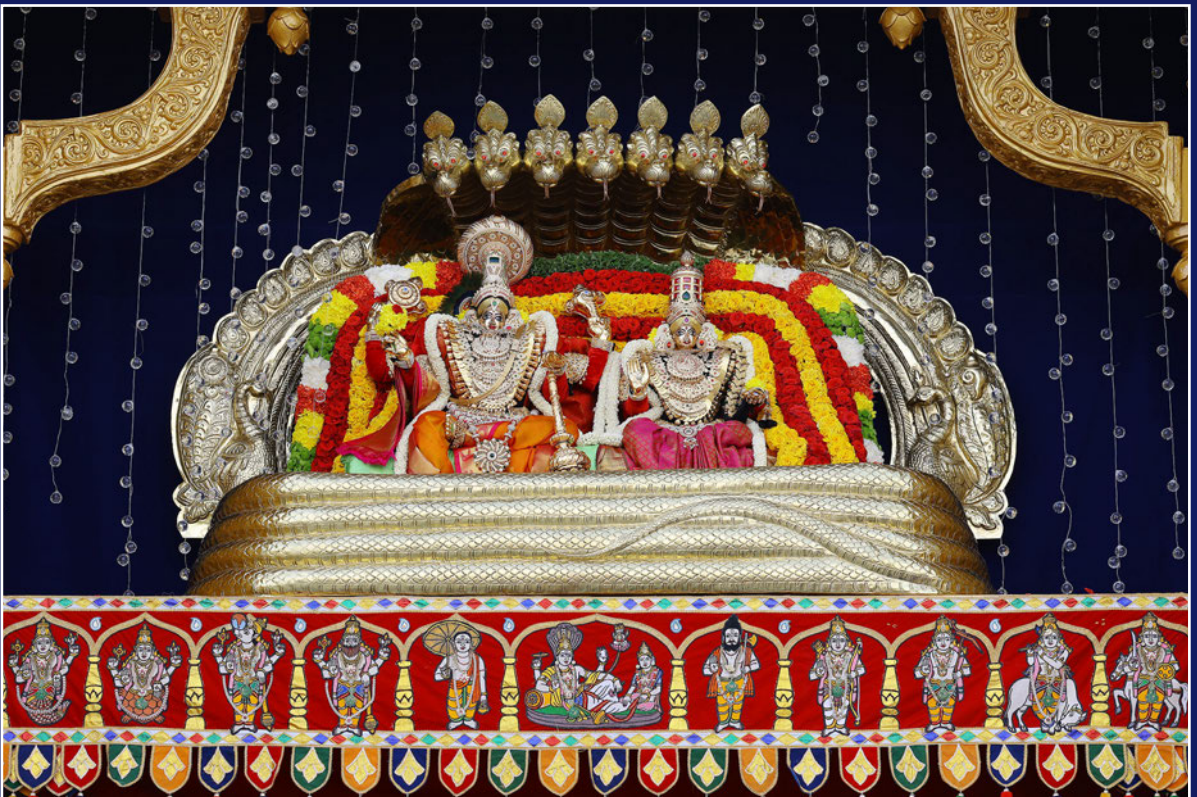


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